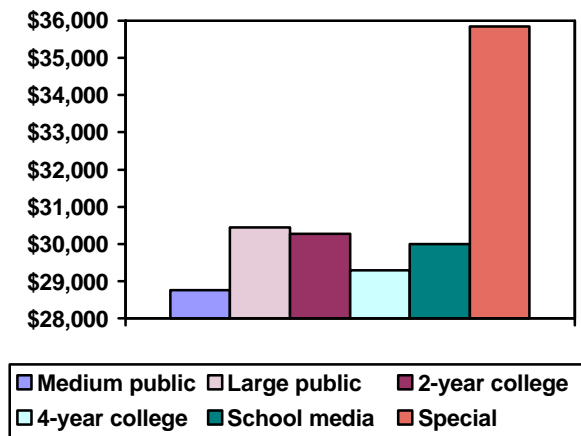


A Salary Comparison of Library Agencies

One could say that comparing the salaries of public, academic, school and special librarians is like comparing football with hockey. A full-time school librarian works ten months out of a year. A special librarian can be anyone from a Ph.D. in a Fortune 500 company to a law librarian in a small town firm. In addition, each type of library survey has many differences. The data collected for public and academic librarians breaks them into categories of jobs (e.g., Director, branch manager, cataloger). Public school data includes data by enrollment figures and per pupil expenditures. But there are two ways to logically compare these distinct types of positions: how beginning librarians are paid and how much salaries change for all professional levels from the previous year.

New graduates from library schools employed in professional full-time positions at medium-sized public libraries earned an average of \$28,767 in 1998. For larger public libraries serving a population of 100,000 or more, the mean in all regions of the United States was \$30,443 (ALA 1998). This is not a surprising difference between a medium-

**Beginning Librarian Salaries
(Chart 1)**



sized and a large public library. What is surprising is what we find in academic settings. Beginning librarians in two-year colleges earned an average \$30,286. In a four-year college, they drew \$29,293 (ALA 1998). Universities pay a similar salary of \$30,236. Thus, community colleges pay their entry-level library professionals \$1,000 more than four-year colleges (ALA 1998).

One would expect information professionals working in special libraries to earn more than their counterparts in more traditional settings. It comes as no surprise then that the average salary for a librarian with two or fewer years of library experience is \$35,843 -- \$5,557 more than a beginning professional in a two-year college (SLA 1998).

Unfortunately, school media specialist salaries at the entry level are not reported by the Educational Research Service in their *National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools*. The median salary reported in *Library Journal* for school librarians was \$31,005 (Gregory and McCook 1998). We can assume that many beginning librarians would start somewhat lower at approximately \$30,000. Chart 1 shows a summary of beginning librarian salaries in all types of libraries.

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Perhaps most interesting to library graduates is the state of the market in 1999. True, the salaries are improving as Library Journal (LJ) reports in its article "Breaking the \$30K Barrier." The job market is improving for recent graduates in all types of libraries. Of the 1850 of these recent graduates who responded to the LJ survey, 1540 are working in full-time professional positions. This is a 3% increase in a one-year period.

Some encouraging news for people employed in library and information science is the trend toward higher salaries. Most libraries reported healthier percent changes in pay from 1997 to 1998 than the inflation rate of 1.44%. Table 1 gives each type of library and the percent change.

Table 1: Library Type	1997 Avg Salary	1998 Avg Salary	Percent Change
School Media	\$44,310	\$45,680	3.10%
Medium Public	\$34,635	\$36,199	4.50%
Large Public	\$36,055	\$38,234	6.00%
Two-year College	\$49,783	\$47,873	-3.80%
Four-year College	\$34,303	\$35,940	4.80%
University	\$40,064	\$39,364	-1.70%
Special	\$48,601	\$50,572	4.10%

It is interesting to note that librarians in two-year colleges had the biggest negative percent change from 1997 to 1998 in their income. Whether this figure is an indication of future trends or just an anomaly of the surveys received, it is hard to say. Public libraries had a healthy year, increasing pay to professionals by 6%. Maybe the time has come for librarians in this field to be recognized by their communities for the important job they do.

Why do some types of librarians earn more than others? An author of the *SLA Salary Survey* makes the statement, "the specialized training of SLA members has proved rewarding, as median salaries of SLA U.S. members have outperformed the U.S. national average [for all librarians] by just under 32, on average (SLA 1998)." Obviously, salary alone does not determine how satisfied a person will be in a certain field. Corporate culture, paid benefits, and the people you work with contribute to employee satisfaction. Nevertheless, it is interesting to examine the differences in pay and what the trends were for the past two years.

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